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ABSTRACT

One of 52 theoretical papers on school crime and its relation to poverty, this chapter presents four moralization paradigms (psychoanalytic, social learning, humanistic, and cognitive-developmental) as explanatory hypotheses for the relationship between poverty and school crime. The paper takes the position that no one paradigm is sufficient to account completely for school crime. Each paradigm is useful in explaining the moral orientations found both within and between individuals involved in school crime. Recent work in moral education is presented under each of the paradigms as a source for the prevention and control of school crime. It is concluded that an awareness of the complexities involved in the moral orientations of youth is a necessary first step in the development of broad-based approaches to the prevention and control of school crime. (Author/MLF)

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MORALIZATION PARADIGMS, POVERTY, AND SCHOOL
CRIME: ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Four moralization paradigms (psychoanalytic, social learning, humanistic, and cognitive-developmental) are presented as explanatory hypotheses for the relationship between poverty and school crime. The paper takes the position that no one paradigm is sufficient to account completely for school crime. Each paradigm is useful in explaining the moral orientations found both within and between individuals involved in school crime. Recent work in moral education is presented under each of the paradigms as a source for the prevention and control of school crime. It is concluded that an awareness of the complexities involved in the moral orientations of youth is a necessary first step in the development of broad-based approaches to the prevention and control of school crime.

Introduction

Criminal acts committed on school grounds are actions which violate standards of right or good conduct which have been codified into law. In this sense, school crime is moral action.¹ How such standards are learned or not learned, the content of such standards, and the degree to which these standards govern behavior are all issues studied by psychologists—and sociologists under the rubric of moralization theory and research. The purpose of this paper is to address the problem of school crime from this important perspective on human development.

As one surveys the literature on moralization theory, four distinctly different positions emerge as fully developed theoretical views. These views have been extensively stated and have attracted wide followings. This paper will not attempt to judge any one of these paradigms as somehow "better." It will be assumed that there is no major consensus within the scientific

¹ Throughout this paper, the term moral will be used exclusively in a descriptive sense. Thus, the opposite of moral will be taken to be nonmoral. The terms prosocial and antisocial will be used when it is necessary to talk about moral actions or beliefs in an evaluative sense.

community concerning the complete superiority of one of these views over the others. Rather than trying to demonstrate or posit superiority of one of these paradigms over the others, and thereby simplify the view of school crime. This paper will assume that all four paradigms have valuable insights to offer the person interested in analyzing the etiology, means of prevention, and control of school crime. The position of this author is that the origins of school crime are diverse, and, for this reason, to analyze it and formulate informed policy recommendations requires a diversity of theoretical perspectives within one's conceptual arsenal. Due to the vast stretch of theoretical territory to be mapped in this paper, only the basic outlines of each paradigm will be presented.

This paper will take the position that the school curriculum, and especially the individual teachers' classrooms, are key areas for intervention to attack the problem of school crime. Therefore, under each paradigm this paper will discuss the educational practices which are entailed. The past 10 years have been unusually rich ones for the development of moral education theory and curriculum. This paper will discuss the moral education

implications of each paradigm and attempt to assess its potential utility for dealing with the complex issue of school crime.

The Psychoanalytic Paradigm

The psychoanalytic position holds that there exists a tripartite division of the personality consisting of the id, the ego, and the superego.² The id is the source of all psychic energy in the personality and it is governed by the pleasure principle. Its sole concerns are the basic instincts of hunger, thirst, sexual release, and safety. The id is impulsive, set within the subconscious, and constantly clamors for release from instinctual tension.

The control of impulsivity within the personality is relegated to two separate subsystems. The ego is governed by the reality principle and acts within the external world to achieve the id's demands consistent with reality. Part of its role is to give danger signals if any of our desires conflicts too much with the "reality outside."

² The reader is referred to Hall (1954) for one of the best short introductions to the psychoanalytic paradigm.

The superego is the moral dimension of the personality, and its role is to bring the actual behavior of the individual into conformity with internalized standards of good or right behavior. The superego uses guilt as punishment and pride as reward in order to bring behavior into line. The years before the child enters school are the critical ones for the learning of moral behavior according to this view. The central mechanism is the resolution of the Oedipal conflict. According to Freud, the young child has strong desires to possess sexually the opposite-sex parent. This impossible desire is finally resolved by the process of identification with the aggressor (in the case of boys, the father). This identification involves the introjection of the father's standards of right and wrong and forms the permanent basis of the superego.

Poverty and the Learning of Moral Standards

There are four possible sources of breakdowns in social controls within the psychoanalytic framework.³ In an environment characterized by a lack of resources

³ Aichhorn (1963) authored one of the seminal works on juvenile delinquency and treatment from the psychoanalytic perspective. Eissler (1949) contains a collection of articles on the same topic.

necessary for the satisfaction of basic needs, these sources are important factors in the causes of school crime.

(1) The antisocial superego refers to a superego that has as standards of appropriate conduct behaviors which are illegal and/or generally called morally wrong. An antisocial superego may be very strong; weakness is not the only fault one may find with the superego. In this case, the signals sent out for the ego to carry into action entail the breaking of contemporary moral standards. It is easy to see how the poverty environment leads to the formation of the antisocial superego. The ghetto environment places the child in frequent contact with lawlessness and actions which do not acknowledge the basic rights of others. This is especially apparent in the models which the child sees controlling resources. The salience of models such as the pimp, hooker, pusher, and gang leader, is increased by the frequent absence of one or both parents.

(2) In some cases, only a weak superego has been internalized. If the parent is not present or respected then there will not be much fear over a loss of love and, as a result, only weak or incomplete standards will be

internalized. This weak superego may contain either prosocial or antisocial standards. When the child with a weak superego is placed in temptation situations, there are no internal controls to restrain destructive impulses.

(3) In the case of the weak ego, the problem isn't inherently a moral one. The problem here is that the ego can't handle the onrush of impulsivity -- it can't do anything with the superego signals. How does the ego reach such a weakened state? If the ego hasn't learned to supply well-being to the organism, it doesn't receive psychic energy and, as a result, it reverts to the primitive, or pleasure-principle, ego. The ego must learn the reality principle if it is to gain ascendancy in the personality -- pain must be endured in order to achieve assured pleasure later. In the poverty environment, forgoing pleasure here and now for greater pleasure later hardly ever pays off. The result is that if it hasn't worked for the parents or other important figures in the child's environment then it won't be passed to the child. The inability to control impulse, to cool it, is one of the largest causes of school crime. For, when the morality of the school is at odds with the morality of the peer group, the school is seen

as an enemy of the only standard for conduct that one has. Schools frustrate ghetto youth because the morality of the schools is basically a middle-class morality -- deferred gratification, as in "work hard and someday...." And, when the schools frustrate the pleasure principle operating in the ghetto child, the dynamic of displaced aggression often occurs and schools become the victims.

(4) A final breakdown of social controls may occur through the use of ego functions in the service of impulse defense. This phrase, taken from Redl and Wineman (1962), refers to the ego functioning in a planned attempt to defend nonacceptable impulsivity. It does this in a number of ways. The most common mechanisms are the use of rationalizations (he did it first, he had it coming, it wasn't my fault, etc.) and a search for delinquency support through gang affiliation or subscription to a delinquent code. Ample support and opportunity for these evasions are available in the poverty subculture.

School crime appears to be more sporadic and episodic than adult crime, which seems to be more a symptom of a serious personality disorder. The psychoanalytic perspective would explain this in terms of the sudden influx of psychic energy that is released during the onset of adolescence. It is often the case that, even in the

presence of well-balanced divisions of the personality, impulsivity will gain the upper hand. The suddenly weakened ego and superego cannot provide the necessary controls, and what results is the adolescent upset, often aggressive and destructive in nature. Schools contain the strongest concentration of adolescents in our society and require of them that they be orderly and hard-working. It is not surprising, from this point of view, that criminal acts often occur on school grounds.

Intervention Strategies

The therapeutic techniques of psychoanalysis are clearly beyond the domain of schools as a tool for combating the antisocial behavior of school crime. The expense and the time involved in classic psychoanalysis make it too expensive and time-consuming for schools to use for a problem on the scale of school crime. As a tool for dealing with delinquents in specially devised group settings, Redl and Wineman (1952, 1962) have sketched out the possible focus such a program might take. Their techniques of programming for ego support and the clinical exploitation of life events show the applicability of psychoanalytic theory in institutional settings.

The psychoanalytic concept of the therapeutic value

of self-knowledge -- making conscious what is unconscious -- has been incorporated into one currently popular approach to values education in the schools. Values clarification, although derived from humanistic psychological theory (the third paradigm to be presented), is a strategy directed at antisocial behavior which shares some of the foci of a psychoanalytic approach to therapy. Values clarification, as described by Raths, Harmin, and Simon (1966), attempts to get the student to analyze the sources of his values (his superego) and to accept as valid only those values which he has freely chosen from alternatives and after consideration of consequences. This strategy could be described as a strengthening of ego functions and as a freeing of oneself from introjected and unreflective behavioral dynamics.

The Social Learning Paradigm

This perspective uses the milieu of the child's social world paired with the principles of behaviorist psychology to account for the learning of moral standards.⁴

⁴ The most generic theory from this position is the "differential association" theory of Sutherland (1947). Glaser's (1956) conception of "differential identifications" was a significant improvement over Sutherland's original idea.

According to this theory, individuals come to behave prosocially or antisocially due to their previous experiences with that type of behavior and whether or not they have been positively reinforced for such behaviors. Key variables in the learning of moral standards are the opportunity to demonstrate the desired behavior; role models for prosocial or antisocial behaviors; and the attractiveness, strength, and propinquity of the reinforcers.

Poverty and the Learning of Moral Standards

There are a number of factors in the poverty environment which make it difficult for the child to learn standards of moral conduct which are shared by the society at large. One factor relates to the availability and nature of models for behavior. Another is the lack of social behavior and consequent existence of delinquent subcultures.

It is difficult enough for middle-class youth living in relative affluence to find models worthy of emulation. For ghetto youth, where models have "made it" and fled to the suburbs, or else are individuals who walk on the edges of lawfulness, the problem of emulating prosocial behavior is especially troublesome.

To the social learning theorist, the parents are the most consistently available and salient models, as well as being primary controllers of reinforcement in the early development of the child. The high incidences of single-parent families and families with both parents working reduce the potential power of this agency of socialization.

The youth growing up in a poverty area is confronted with the frustration of knowing that, no matter how hard he works, by virtue of his race, language, or level of academic skills, he will never be able to get the ends that the capitalist system holds before him every day in the media. This means/ends inconsistency creates frustration and aggression, forcing the youth to explore other means and other ends. The creation of the delinquent subculture is one of these alternatives (Cohen, 1955; Miller, 1958). Within the delinquent subculture, the youth can both share the frustration he feels and find a sense of excitement. Status, which he cannot achieve through legitimate channels, can be achieved here. It is the existence of the delinquent subculture, and its ability to substitute attractive roles and reinforcers for irrelevant or unattractive roles with no payoff, which creates a social context within which antisocial

behavior becomes accepted as the norm and internalized.

Intervention Strategies

One of the great frustrations of school personnel is that they generally have so little control over the total environment that youth experience. Teachers and administrators are only a few of the models available to youth, and they can only reinforce for a very narrow range of prosocial behaviors within the schools. Given these limitations, many of the attempts to control school crime have focused on out-of-school factors. Some out-of-school programs have focused on the family (Birt, 1956); others, on working directly with gangs (Robinson, 1960).

Within the school, it would appear that there are a number of ways to use the principles of behaviorist psychology to combat the influence of poverty on the learning of moral standards.

Prosocial role models can be presented through the staff and through action projects. Both Jones (1971) and Newmann (1975) have outlined approaches for getting students involved in prosocial activities in the community.

. The principles of behavior modification can be

applied in the classroom. A plethora of texts have been published within the past few years which describe this strategy (MacMillan, 1973; Poteet, 1973; Blackham & Silbermar, 1975). These proposals for behavior modification in the school face a number of difficulties. First, teachers and schools seldom control the factors which youth see as important (positively reinforcing). Second is the difficulty of deciding in a pluralistic society whose concept of prosocial behavior is to be selected for reinforcement. Third is the impossibility of controlling the total environment. Clearly, a Walden II (Skinner, 1962) is not practical and probably not desirable. There is a common-sense power to the suggestions of the behavior modifiers, but when attempting to deal with practical social concerns in a complex social environment the solutions seem to be beyond the reach of mortals.

The Humanistic Psychology Paradigm

Historically, this paradigm emerged as a reaction to what were perceived as two equally unattractive views of human nature. On the one hand was the dark, negative, pathological view offered by the Freudians. On the other hand was the mechanistic view of the behaviorists. The

view which emerged as a reaction was called third force or humanistic psychology and its primary spokesman was Abraham Maslow.

Maslow (1968, 1970) has presented a theory of human motivation which assumes that needs are ordered along a hierarchy of prepotency. When the most prepotent needs have been satisfied, the next need emerges and presses for satisfaction. Maslow assumes that there are five basic needs, which have been arranged below:

- (5) Self-actualization needs: The desire for self-fulfillment, becoming what one has the potential to become.
- (4) The esteem needs: Competency, self-esteem, self-enhancement.
- (3) The love and belongingness needs: Warmth, status, acceptance, approval.
- (2) The safety needs: Protection from harm or injury.
- (1) The physiological needs: Basic tissue needs, i.e., hunger and thirst.

According to Maslow, the prerequisite of normal growth is the satisfaction of the primary needs -- physiological safety. If this essential core of the person is frustrated, denied, or suppressed, sickness

results. The behavioral result of this frustration is aggression, hostility, hatred, and destructiveness. If, on the other hand, the individual is self-actualized, his or her behavior is characterized by such prosocial behaviors as accepting self and others for what they are, feeling an identification with mankind as a whole, and having a highly developed sense of ethics. The main barrier standing in the way of self-actualization is the incomplete achievement of lower needs. Attention cannot be given to higher needs when lower needs are unmet.

Poverty and the Learning of Moral Standards

Maslow has said that there are no self-actualized individuals in the ghetto. In other words, the ghetto is by definition a place where basic needs are not met. In the presence of such factors as poor diet and unsafe school and home environment, it is not surprising that the secondary needs (love, esteem, and self-actualization), which are essentially prosocial in nature, go unattended or develop abnormally. If one has no love relationships with others, then one can casually harm others or their property. And if one's primary needs are unmet, then one cannot develop normal love relationships, for the lower,

unmet needs will preempt all others.

Intervention Strategies

Bookshelves in education are currently bulging with books on humanistic, or affective, education.⁵ They all share the humanistic psychologists' view of the positive potential for human growth, and most of them view current educational practices as hindering this development. The focus of affective education is to address students' needs to feel good about themselves and to feel cared for by the teacher and by each other -- in other words it addresses Maslow's third and fourth needs. Such an approach assumes that the basic needs are already met -- a questionable assumption with youth from poverty environments. At any rate, the humanistic education strategy is to create environments in the classroom which are accepting and loving and which enhance self-esteem. If this can be achieved, according to this view, the antisocial behavior one commonly finds would all but disappear, since when people feel loved and have a strong sense of self-esteem and worth, there is no place or

⁵ Miller (1976) and Read and Simon (1975) provide comprehensive overviews of this growing field.

reason for destructive behavior within their lives.

The Cognitive-Developmental Paradigm

This view has a much narrower focus than do the views described above. Its aim is to explain the development of structures of moral thought, rather than to present a complete theory of motivation and behavior. The most persuasive spokesman of the cognitive-developmental view has been Lawrence Kohlberg. Kohlberg holds that there is an invariant developmental sequence of stages of moral thought (Kohlberg, 1968, 1969). All individuals have the potential to achieve the highest stage (stage 6), but an individual may become fixated at any stage. Growth, or development in the structures of one's moral reasoning, depends upon the individual encountering moral conflict and having examples of higher-stage reasoning as models for more adequate resolution of the moral conflict. The stages of moral development are:

- I. Preconventional level
 - Stage 1. Punishment and obedience orientation
 - Stage 2. Naive instrumental hedonism
- II. Conventional level
 - Stage 3. Good boy/nice girl morality of maintaining good relations, approval of others

Stage 4. Authority-maintaining,
law-and-order morality

III. Principled level

Stage 5. Morality of contract and
democratically accepted
principles

Stage 6. Morality of individual
principles of conscience

This perspective holds that an individual interprets his or her environment from his or her current stage of moral development. For example, during stage 1, right is determined by power -- the powerful are the determiners of what is morally right. A stage 1 child seeing one child beating up another perceives the situation in terms of the winner having the morally superior position. According to this view, movement to stages 3 and 4 is a prerequisite for moral behavior, since it is at these stages that one first begins to take the other's perspective into account. However, it isn't until the principled level that there is congruence between thought and action. Kohlberg's stages represent growth in moral reasoning only. They do not represent growth in moral action below stages 5 and 6. He makes a crucial distinction between content and structure. Content is the choice of right action in a situation, whereas structure refers to how one organizes his or her thought -- the stage of moral reasoning. It is possible to come up on any side of a moral problem at any stage. However, according to Kohlberg (1969), when

one reaches the principled level, there is a congruence between thought and action (between structure and content).

According to Kohlberg, the moral standards we learn are interpreted in terms of our current level of moral development. For example, a stage 2 child will say stealing is wrong because you could get into trouble and maybe not get your allowance, whereas when the child develops a stage 3 morality he will say stealing is wrong because good boys don't steal or he doesn't want to disappoint his parents, friends, or teachers.

Poverty and the Development of Moral Thought

Kohlberg and his associates have not studied the relationship between moral development and socioeconomic status. Almost all their research has been based on the study of middle-class individuals. What information is available would indicate that socioeconomic status is positively correlated with stage of moral reasoning (Boehm, 1962) and that delinquents reason at lower stages than nondelinquents do (Fodor, 1972). Kohlberg (1976) attributes this to the fact that middle-class children have more opportunity to take the point of view of the more distant, impersonal, and influential roles in basic societal

institutions.

A more complex explanation is needed to account adequately for the failure of youth in poverty environments to develop morally. For one thing, the poverty environment, with all its violence and tragedy, is not perceived by most ghetto youth as embodying moral conflict. The reaction to potentially unsettling situations is immediate reflexive action followed by after-the-fact rationalizations.

The Facilitation of Moral Development

Kohlberg and his associates have produced a plethora of curriculum materials and how-to-do-it texts aimed at spurring moral development in classroom situations (Mattox, 1975; Galbraith & Jones, 1976; Kohlberg & Selman, 1972; Kohlberg & Fenton 1976).⁶ The basic strategy involved is to present youth with moral conflict situations (moral dilemmas) and hold classroom discussions, making sure that a broad range of possible responses are brought out. The research that the method is based on shows that children can understand all stages below and one stage

⁶ Kohlberg and Turiel (1971) present one of the best introductions to the educational implications of the theory.

above their own stage and that when children have a choice they see the next-higher stage as preferable to their own (Rest, 1973). Thus, if children are exposed to moral conflict and the next highest stage, moral growth will take place.

Kohlberg and his associates have also addressed the issue of the moral stage of a given environment. In an effort to raise the level of moral development of prison inmates, it was attempted to structure a justice system within a prison to counteract the all-pervasive influence of the preconventional prison milieu (Kohlberg, Scharf, & Hickey, 1971). This problem points out one of the major limitations of the cognitive-developmental view as a potential solution for dealing with school crime. Namely, it is impossible to restructure the child's environment into a just environment. However, attempts have been made within schools to create just mini-environments.

The second major problem is that, even with the best of moral education programs with middle-class youth, Kohlberg will admit it is unlikely that most youth will reach the principled level before they graduate from high school. Given that there doesn't emerge a congruence between moral thought and moral action before this level,

then, as far as school crime is concerned, there can be no expected payoff during the school years. A child at stage 3 or 4 can justify the breaking of school windows just as easily as a child at stage 1, and his movement from 1 to 3 or 4 is no guarantee of more prosocial behavior.

Summary and Conclusions

It is well known that the environment of poverty does not have the same effect on all children who grow up in it. (Not all children growing up in ghettos commit criminal actions on school grounds.)

The presence or absence of moral dispositions which either discourage or encourage school crime may be explained by any one of the paradigms discussed above. However, except for rare cases, it is unlikely that a single paradigm and the learning and motivational factors associated with it will account for the full explanation of a child's moral behavior. It is the position of this paper that no one paradigm will account for all the variations in moral standards within a single child, just as no one paradigm will account for the range of variation from child to child.

One plausible explanation is that the ghetto environment is far from an homogeneous environment, that is, children growing up in it have a wide variety of different experiences relevant to the learning of moral standards. There can be no doubt that this perspective is in some respects a valid position. However, it can be claimed that even when we control for many of these differences there is still wide variation in the incidence of criminal behavior among the youth. In addition to the subtle differences within the environment, additional considerations are needed to account for school crime in poverty environments.

At this point, I would like briefly to develop the concept of moral orientation. I will base this concept on the observation that individuals respond quite differently to the experience of moral conflict. Some may respond reflexively, some thoughtfully, and others perhaps on an emotional level. I would infer from this that each individual's moral behavior can be most adequately explained by referring to a particular paradigm or some combination of paradigms. Thus, with some delinquents, psychoanalytic concepts concerning superego factors are most powerful in explaining behavior; with others, such factors as need

satisfaction, structures of moral reasoning, or delinquent subcultures might be most powerful. If we add to the concept of moral orientation the view that there are three dimensions within which morality is learned -- knowledge, feeling, and conduct (after Brown, 1965) -- nested within each of the orientations, the complexity involved in the explanation of moral behavior is readily apparent. The view presented at this point now holds that, in addition to knowing the dominant orientation of moralization for an individual, we also need to examine the differential learning that has gone on within each of the dimensions.

The dimension most salient from the psychoanalytic orientation is feeling. Guilt and shame and how the ego reacts to them are the primary causal agents in determining moral action. The social learning orientation sees the conduct dimension as most salient; that is, the shaping of behavior through selective reinforcement (operant conditioning) is the primary factor in determining the moral nature of the individual. The humanistic orientation has always stressed the affective side of man. Moral action, according to this paradigm, is primarily the result of feeling associated with need

fulfillment. If needs are unsatisfied (be they primary or secondary), then the inherent goodness is frustrated and the positive affect that comes with our humanity is not allowed to operate. The cognitive-developmental orientation is primarily focused on the cognitive dimension, that is, how one reasons about moral situations is the key variable.

The final determination of whether an action will be prosocial or antisocial is the result of a complex interaction of learning across all three dimensions within one's orientation(s). Thus, in addition to knowing the general environment in which the moral behavior has been learned and, hence, the dominant paradigm, one also needs to take into account the impact that that environment has had on the three different dimensions of morality. Not all dimensions are equally salient to all individuals. Behavior in a particular situation is the result of complex interaction between affect, knowledge, and previously learned behavior patterns.

For example, a youth is out with friends and is challenged to break into the local school and trash the interior. His behavior will be determined by the interactions among his cognitive perceptions about the rightness or wrongness of the proposed action, whether or not he has

internalized antisocial actions of this type into habitual behavior patterns and the feeling states associated with such actions. If all the dimensions are consonant, then the prediction of behavior is rather simple. However, if there is some dissonance (e.g., he has done this before many times and has been reinforced for it by his peers, but this time is feeling guilt), then the prediction of his actions becomes more complex and more imprecise. His basic orientation will determine the weights to be attached to each of the dimensions.

In conclusion, to understand school crime requires understanding the broad range of complexity involved in moralization. Unidimensional programs aimed at only conduct, or only knowledge, will be successful only as the programs accidentally deal with the other dimensions. For programs aimed at the control of school crime to be successful, it is necessary to address the complexity of moralization head on and build programs that deal with all the dimensions on which learning has taken place. These programs must be widely based enough to address the differentially based moral orientations of the individuals likely to be involved in school crime.

The many ways that moral behavior is acquired and the many different levels and orientations from which

people operate preclude quick and dramatic solutions to issues like school crime. Existing programs will continue to show some successes and some failures due to the chance factors at work regarding the probability that the focus of the program matches up with some of the orientations or dimensions of the individuals involved. As we become more informed about the nature of moralization, and as we develop our ability to assess the moral orientations of individuals and groups and our ability to devise programs that attack the problem at its core -- the orientation of the individual -- the first steps at effective control will have been taken.

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